The Cleveland Museum of Art

Cleveland Museum of Art Trustee Honors LeBron James' Return with Gift

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Agnes Gund donates "Basketball Drawing" by David Hammons

CLEVELAND (June 16, 2015) – Art and sports come together in a unique gift to the Cleveland Museum of Art from one of its trustees.

The museum announced today that trustee Agnes Gund, one of the most prominent advocates for the transformative potential of art, recently donated an untitled Basketball Drawing from 2002 by leading African American artist David Hammons. Her timely gift is in honor of LeBron James, who returned to his native Northeast Ohio last summer to lead the Cleveland Cavaliers to the NBA Finals.

The *Basketball Drawings* belong to an ongoing series of works on paper by Hammons that speak to the artist's concerns with social issues and examine art historical and more formal traditions. In each instance, the drawing is made by repeatedly bouncing a basketball coated in graphite upon the surface of the paper, leaving a mark which acts as a trace of Hammons's performative action. The untitled work from 2002 is a large, framed drawing with a shifting atmospheric surface; sections of the work are dark and others almost white, as if Hammons used the rather clumsy basketball with the precision of a finely sharpened pencil. By propping up the drawing with a water bottle wedged between the back of the frame and the wall, Hammons subtly connects the entire work to the reality of everyday life and consumerism.

"This work critically considers what it means to be African American - or any minority in modern society," said William M. Griswold, director of the Cleveland Museum of Art. "I am extremely thankful to Aggie for her brilliant idea of giving this major work to Cleveland. Not only will it celebrate the return of LeBron James but, in a more general way, it will celebrate the city's renaissance and future."

“Aggie’s gift not only celebrates a great sportsman,” said Reto Thüring, Associate Curator of Contemporary Art, “it also adds a work to the museum’s collection by one of the most important and compelling artists of our time. This is a truly transformative gift that emphasizes the CMA’s commitment to show and collect the most relevant art of our times.”

A philanthropist and collector of modern and contemporary art, Agnes Gund is president emerita of the Museum of Modern Art in New York and chair of its International Council. In addition to serving on the museum’s board, she is chair of MoMA PS1, founder and chair of both Studio in a School and the Center for Curatorial Leadership, and currently serves on the boards of Chess in the Schools, the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, the Foundation for Art and Preservation in Embassies and Socrates Sculpture Park, among others.

“This unique work by David Hammons provides an opportunity for the Cleveland Museum of Art to reach an audience that would normally not find its way to the museum,” said Gund. “Moreover, the fact that it is as much a drawing as it is an installation translates a traditional medium into the language of modern life.”

David Hammons has worked in a variety of media including performance, installation, sculpture and printmaking since he began his career in the 1970s in Los Angeles. Rooted in the African American experience, he creates works out of the debris of urban life using poignant sarcasm and clever puns to force viewers to confront cultural stereotypes and racial issues. Since the 1970s, he has consistently employed unconventional and symbolically loaded materials such as clippings of hair from barber shops, fried chicken, bottles of cheap wine, spades, dirt, and paper bags, among other things. Despite his international success, Hammons has remained an elusive figure who never really wanted to be part of an art world that admires him.

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About the Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland Museum of Art is renowned for the quality and breadth of its collection, which includes more than 63,000 artworks and spans 6,000 years of achievement in the arts. The museum is a significant international forum for exhibitions, scholarship and performing arts and is a leader in digital innovations. One of the top comprehensive art museums in the nation, recognized for its award-winning Open Access program and free of charge to all, the Cleveland Museum of Art is located in the University Circle neighborhood.

The museum is supported in part by residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture and made possible in part by the Ohio Arts Council (OAC), which receives support from the State of Ohio and the National Endowment for the Arts. The OAC is a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally and economically. For more information about the museum and its holdings, programs and events, call 888-CMA-0033 or visit cma.org [1].

Press Announcements [2]

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